

## ***FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET***

**Meeting Date:** October 11, 2012

**Agenda Item:** Proposed Fishing Regulation Changes for 2013

**Division:** Fish and Wildlife (Fisheries)

**Action Needed:** Final Approval of Proposed Rule

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 15 minutes

### **Background**

On Aug. 2, the FWP Commission approved tentative changes for the 2013 Fishing Regulations:

- Bitterroot River (Western District): Extend a harvest section of the river to include Woodside FAS.
- Clearwater River (Western District): Change regulations to reflect removal of Lake Inez fish barrier.
- Elk Lake (Central District): Expand catch and release regulation to include grayling.
- Red Rock Creek (Central District): Expand cutthroat trout harvest opportunities to protect grayling.
- Upper Red Rock Lake (Central District): Establish new regulations to allow harvest of cutthroat trout and catch and release angling for grayling.
- Widgeon Pond (Central District): Expand cutthroat trout harvest opportunities to protect grayling.
- Yellowstone River from YNP to Billings (Central District): Eliminate exception that allows 2 lines with 2 hooks per line all year from the mouth of the Clarks Fork River to I-90 Bridge at Billings.
- Fort Peck Reservation - Tribal Boundary Water Regulations (Eastern District): Change catfish harvest regulation in response to Fort Peck tribal staff interest in consistency with tribal fishing regulations and State of Montana regulations.

### **Public Involvement Process & Results**

FWP received five public comments; three of which didn't pertain to the proposed changes but will be considered at a future time. One comment opposed the proposal to extend the harvest section for trout on the Bitterroot River further upstream to include Woodside FAS. One comment opposed the proposal to reduce the number of lines allowed from two to one on the Yellowstone from YNP to Billings, stating that two lines are necessary to catch large fish. FWP didn't receive comments on any other proposed regulation changes. A summary of the comments and a response has been prepared.

### **Alternatives & Analysis**

The commission could adopt all, some or none of the proposed changes to the 2013 fishing regulations.

### **Agency Recommendation & Rationale**

FWP recommends that the commission adopt all of the proposed changes. Opposition to the proposed changes was minimal (two comments). The proposed change for the Bitterroot River would have minimal impact on catch-and-release angling. The catch-and-release section of the river would only be shortened by several hundred feet; there would still be nearly 30 miles of catch-and-release angling. The change would benefit the public that wants to harvest fish from the bank at Woodside FAS (currently not allowed). The change from two to one line on the Yellowstone River (YNP to Billings) would simply the regulations and minimally impact angling opportunity; anglers would still be allowed to fish with six lines immediately downstream from this area.

**Proposed Motion**

I move to adopt FWP's proposed final proposed regulation changes for the 2013 fishing season.